

Kansas Inaugurates Oral Health Coalition

Kansas joined the ranks of many other states with a formal oral health coalition—designed to improve the oral health of Kansans through advocacy, public awareness and education. The coalition, called Oral Health Kansas, will be a not-for-profit corporation with a board of directors, an executive director and part-time administrative support position. Over 70 people attended the inaugural meeting September 12, including dentists, dental hygienists, physicians, public health professionals, educators, funders and community leaders.

Kim Moore, President of United Methodist Health Ministry Fund—major supporter of oral health since 1997, welcomed participants and provided background on the coalition's development. Mary Baskett, KHSA Executive Director, described the mission, values and vision of Oral Health Kansas. Dawn McGlasson, State Oral Health Program Consultant, reviewed the priorities the coalition will address in the first year including: a new surveillance system to provide solid baseline data on children's oral health status; educating legislators about oral health issues; boosting dental participation in Medicaid and HealthWave; and supporting the expanded use of dental hygienists in public health settings made possible by the "Access to Care" bill passed this year.

Kevin Robertson of the Kansas Dental Association and Sally Finney of the Kansas Public Health Association also addressed the inaugural Oral Health Kansas meeting.